



The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative

Statement on the Ma'arra Museum

A chapter in the efforts of the people of Ma'arra Al Nu'man to protect their museum and their cultural heritage has come to a close with the capture of their city by Syrian Regime forces on January 29, 2020.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria and the withdrawal of the regime from the city in 2012, the people of Ma'arra have sought to make the protection of their museum, cultural heritage sites and monuments a top priority. Doing so despite incessant indiscriminate bombardment of their city and the terrible humanitarian catastrophe with much loss of life and damage to their homes and livelihoods. Even when their town was forcefully taken over by Jihadists under Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) in 2019, the local city council insisted on retaining control of their museum and refused to hand it over to officials from the Salvation Government (under HTS control).

Throughout this period, local heritage professionals and former museum staff were able to protect the contents of the Ma'arra museum which houses a unique collection of mosaics and artefacts from the Dead Cities region along with thousands of other objects and artifacts rescued from nearby sites and monuments. This collection is considered to be one of the most important of 3rd to 6th century Roman and Byzantine mosaics in the Middle East .

These efforts to protect the museum and other sites and monuments in and around the city of Ma'arra were led by Abdel Rahman Al-Yahya and his team from the Syrian Heritage Center, a local NGO in Ma'arra supported by The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative (TDA-HPI) .

We now anticipate that the Department of Antiquities in Damascus (DGAM) will now continue the efforts to protect and preserve contents of the Ma'arra museum. We also expect that they will recognize the efforts by the people of Ma'arra to save the contents of that museum through the most difficult of circumstances and at great danger and cost to themselves and their families.

Professor Amr Al-Azm
TDA founder and board member.
Coordinator of TDA-HPI